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Arab - Israeli Conflict.

(May - July 1967)

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UNITED KINGDOM MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

845 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Speech by Lord Caradon

in the Security Council

29 May 1967.

THE MIDDLE EAST

No. 38

Mr. President,

When we met briefly and inconclusively last week I stated that we had four questions to tackle together.

First, how can tension be relieved and immediate dangers of conflict removed.

Second, how can the rights of free and unimpeded passage through the Straits of Tiran be guaranteed and assured.

And third, how can effective United Nations measures and machinery to keep the peace and prevent violence and conflict through the whole area best be worked out for the future.

And, fourth, what new and additional action can be taken to prevent such dangers to the peace recurring in future years.

I said that no-one could doubt the danger, and no-one could doubt the urgency, and I spoke of the challenge and the opportunity which faced the United Nations.

There were those who sought to belittle the danger and to doubt the urgency. We were told that we were artificially dramatising the situation, that there was no need for the Council to meet. We were even told that no serious incidents had been reported.

We have pressed from the start that the Council should meet and act. And our first purpose was to support the Secretary-General in his mission to Cairo. But there were those who maintained, and their arguments prevailed, that we should await the Secretary-General's report. Now we have that report we have had ample time to study it. The report more than confirms both the danger and the urgency. In fearless language, all more forceful by reason of its simplicity and restraint, the report both shows the immediate dangers and points the way to the action we must take.

We have very good reason, as we expected, to be grateful to the Secretary-General for his decision to go to Cairo and for the despatch with which he completed his mission. We are grateful too

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for the service he has done in giving us so soon after his return from that exacting and critical and lonely expedition a report so compelling in its statement of the dangers and so constructive in its indications of the action required.

The report in clear and direct words tells us how the Secretary-General called attention to "the dangerous consequences which would ensue from restricting innocent passage of ships in the Strait of Tiran" and expressed his deep concern in this regard that "no precipitate action would be taken" and went on to state the fear that a clash between the United Arab Republic and Israel over this issue would inevitably set off, to use his words, "general conflict in the Near East".

We cannot fail in the light of that warning to concentrate first and foremost on the vital need for finding a solution of the critical problem of the Gulf of Aqaba. And, as I made clear when I spoke last week, we consider that this must take account not only of the normal requirements of the States bordering the Gulf, but also the interests of all maritime powers.

From the first my Government has made its position on that main issue of the Gulf of Aqaba absolutely clear. It was stated by a representative of my country ten years ago in the General Assembly. It has been consistently maintained and repeatedly and positively confirmed. It is in this main issue that we should first ensure that belligerence is avoided and special restraint exercised.

But as the Secretary-General also emphasised in his report the freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran is not the only immediate issue which is endangering peace in the Near East. He points to the possible courses of action which could contribute to the reduction of tension.

Having urged all concerned "to exercise special restraint to forego belligerence and to avoid all other actions which could increase tension" the Secretary-General turns to practical proposals, proposals to reduce immediate tension and to keep the peace in the whole area in the future. Now we must surely engage on an urgent study of ways and means by which the United Nations can assist in achieving those purposes. As the Secretary-General says we must fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force. He has proposed full recourse to theUnited Nations peace machinery still present and available, so that there can be a continuing and effective United Nations presence in the area. We must persuade those directly concerned to co-operate to the full. We must be ready to consider new and original methods, with special reference to the possible steps which could be taken by mutual consent to which the Secretary-General has referred in his report. Without the positive and constructive contribution of the United Nations we should be left with the fuses still lit which at any moment could lead to a series of explosions doing irreperable damage. We are ready and eager to work with the Secretary-General and all members of the Council andwith the parties concerned to find urgent means to restore the effectiveness of the international effort.

Mr. President, I trust that today we all realise the extent ofour obligation and our opportunity.

For ten years the United Nations have successfully performed a most valuable task. All who have contributed to that success have earned the gratitude of the world in preventing bloodshed and enabling the pursuit of peace to go forward.

/A supreme

A supreme effort is now required of us to save the situation. Surely all of us, permanent and non-permanent members of the Council, must join in that effort. I might say that I trust that my friend the Distinguished Delegate of the United Arab Republic will also co-operate in the search for a solution. I listened with close and respectful attention to the speech which he made today. I am determined that I shall say no word which shall increase tension or animosity. When we have studied his speech it may be that we would wish to make some comment on his detailed statements. I would only say now, with respect, that I trust that thesomewhat moderate tone of his speech today as compared with his speech last week may perhaps indicate some improvement in the general situation. This is no time for any of us to hold back. It is a time for international understanding and international good faith and international co-operation.

For we must all surely recognise that what is at stake is not only thepeace of the Near East and saving the peoples of the Near East from the scourge of war. The effectiveness of the world organisation which we are all pledged to support is at stake. We seek a solution compatible with the sovereign rights of all nations since we are all pledged, to use the word of the Charter, to defend "the equal rights of nations large and small". We are pledged too, and again I use the words of theCharter, "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained ". We must be ready to work with the Secretary-General and with each other in mutual respect to save the peace and achieve a just settlement and restore the authority of the United Nations.

These must be our purposes, and for my country I say now that from the first we have sought to work for a solution within the framework of the United Nations. That is our purpose now. We trust that all will join in that international endeavour. If they do, we could even at this late hour turn the dangers of untold bloodshed and disastrous conflict which we face today into a triumph for the rule of reason and law. We could take together a long step forward towards the creation of a stable world order.

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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

UNITED KINGDOM MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
845 THIRD AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y.

30 May, 1967.

Dear George,

I was very much distressed by the message you gave me on the telephone this afternoon, and I have at once checked back to the instructions (Foreign Office telegram No. 2328).

The relevant paragraph of the instructions is as follows:

> "The precise tactics that you use would have to depend on the course of discussion in the Council, but I would wish you in your intervention to state firmly our views on the situation in the Gulf of Aqaba. You should make it clear that we regard quote belligerence unquote as applying to action in the Gulf of Aqaba, and I am glad to learn that Mr. Goldberg intends to take the same line. Following up the general line of your speech on 24 May you should concentrate above all upon the vital need for a solution to be found for the critical problems in the Gulf of Aqaba. This must take account not only of the normal requirements of the States bordering on the Gulf, but of those of all maritime States. This is H.M.G.'s essential interest as a maritime and trading power. You should recall para. 10 of U Thant's report echoing in strong terms his

/concern

The Rt. Hon. George Thomson, M.P.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

concern at the danger of restricting innocent passage of ships through the Straits of Tiran."

I have checked back again to my speech and I am bound to say that the three paragraphs which I have marked in the text attached seem to me to interpret the instructions in exact and explicit language. Indeed I cannot see how I could have followed the wording of the instructions more closely or more emphatically. Consequently I am at a loss to see how this misunderstanding has arisen.

It was indeed extremely kind of you to raise this with me personally.

Yours ever

Hugh

(Caradon)

CONFIDENTIAL

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE MINISTER OF STATE AND THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR AT 7, CARVER ROAD, ON SUNDAY, 30 JULY AT 3.10 PM

Present:

The Rt. Hon. G.M. Thomson. Mr. Aharon Remez
Mr. H.J. Arbuthnott Mr. Y. Anug

Mr. Remez began the conversation by referring to Jerusalem and saying that it was impossible for the Israelis to make any concessions over the Old City. The harder they were pressed the more intransigent they were likely to be.

2. Mr. Anug referred to the conversation between Mr. Eban and the Foreign Secretary. As a result of Mr. Remez's conversation with the Foreign Secretary the Embassy had sent a message to Tel Aviv reporting that the Foreign Secretary had declared H.M. Government's long-term willingness to supply arms to Israel. In addition Mr. Thomson had told Mr. Remez that there were no difficulties over Mr. Remez's letter of 11 July.

3. Mr. Thomson said that in between his telephoning Mr. Remez and the final decision of the Foreign Secretary, to whom the papers had (has) to be put, Mr. Eban's letter arrived, but it did not contain the further report on Israeli thinking that Mr. Brown had been led to expect. We therefore wanted to delay the decision on arms so that we could consider it in a wider context. Speaking personally, Mr. Thomson suggested that Mr. Eban should sent a personal message to the

Foreign Secretary. Mr. Thomson accepted what Mr. Remez had said about Jerusalem but that it would be most useful if Mr. Eban could tell the Foreign Secretary that applications from refugees wanting to return to the West Bank were flowing in. Mr. Remez replied that this could not happen so long as Israel was not a partner to the arrangements being made. What was holding them back was the fact that noone would recognise Israel's rights in the matter. Surely officials from Jordan and Israel could meet.

4. Mr. Thomson asked why the standard I.R.C. form could not be used. Mr. Remez said there was no such form. The Israeli Government had to scrutinise applications. If things went wrong it would be the Israelis who would take the can. Mr. Thomson said that our information was that the forms were over-printed with "Ministry of Interior, State of Israel". He suggested that Mr. Eban should let the Foreign Secretary have some hard information about the refugee situation. Mr. Remez replied that this type of approach would be taken in Israel as pressure. But pressure for what? Over Jerusalem? If that was the case, the Israeli Government would take a hard view. Was it over

/refugees?

refugees? This had not been discussed between Mr. Brown and Mr. Eban at all. The Israeli Government were ready to accept everyone who came back but they had to scrutinise the applications. They could not have a situation where the whole West Bank might explode. It was necessary to have a questionnaire that enabled them to scrutinise applications. In order to do that the Israeli Government have to admit that it did not exist. Mr. Thomson said that to keep people on the black list out was all right but to keep out the other 95% because of the 5% on the black list was not all right. He had also heard that the questionnaire asked for too many facts and it was therefore impossible to answer. Mr. Remez said that the questions were worked out with the Red Cross. But in any case the Israelis were limited on what they could do while the exercise was turned into a political problem attempting to show how unreasonable the Israelis were being. The form was stamped by the Red Cross. The Israelis marked it Ministry of the Interior to avoid the scheme being run by the army. Mr. Anug said that Jordan wanted to use the present problem as a permanent source of trouble in the way the previous refugee problem had been used. Mr. Thomson commented that

that might be the rumour but the fact was that King Hussein did not want this to remain a permanent source of trouble.

5. Mr. Remez said that Great Britain had not recognised Israeli occupation of the West Bank yet. He presumed our Embassy in Tel Aviv dealt with the Israeli Government over West Bank affairs; why couldn't Jordan?

6. Mr. Thomson than asked why these political problems should fall on the heads of the refugees? Mr. Remez said that the Jordanians should put the Israelis to the test. There had to be a Government of Israel permit. The Red Cross or UNRWA could not give an entry permit into Israel - what country would accept that an international organisation should give entry permits into a country's territory?

7. Mr. Thomson asked whether the Israelis were willing to deal through the Red Cross. Mr. Remez said it was too slow through third parties. But in any case the crux was that the Israelis would have to issue a permit as long as the Jordanians would not have anything to do with an Israeli receiving authority. There could be no progress.

8. Mr. Thomson then went on to ask whether Israel could start general negotiations with Jordan.

Mr. Remez said that he thought there could be some change in this but the two questions were:

(a) Would Hussein survive long enough to start negotiations, and

(b) If he started would he last to the end?

The general political discussions perhaps should not start at the moment. But what would help would be exploratory administrative talks. The Jordanians did not appear to be willing for this.

9. Mr. Thomson said that another aspect of these problems on which Mr. Brown felt he was entitled to know Mr. Eban's views was whether there could be any short-term steps to open up the Canal. Mr. Remez thought that if the United Nations took the matter up, he thought so. Mr. Thomson asked whether the Israelis would be willing to withdraw a certain distance from the Canal? Mr. Remez said he could not speak for his Government but he was sure there could be no problem if the Israelis were guaranteed the right of transit through the Canal. Mr. Thomson said that if there was a general opening up of the Canal a United Nations presence would be needed. He asked what the Israeli Government thought about this? Mr. Remez

said that it depended on the type of the United Nations presence. If it was an UNTSO, which was not likely to disappear, this might be O.K., but if it was a UNEF that could be withdrawn that was not O.K.

10. Mr. Thomson said that he had intended his question to be more limited. He asked how far the Israeli Government would be able to withdraw from the Bank from a military point of view. Could the Israelis go back 10 or 15 kilometres and still be in a defensible military position? Mr. Remez said there was no military line; it was a political problem only.

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